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HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS MORNING.

AUBERT GALLION QUE
W M Pozer 23 DEC 91

HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS.

The blessed Christmas time knows no difference in nation or people or kindred or tongue. Wherever the wonderful story of that first Christmas in Bethlehem is told there prevails the same spirit of peace on earth to men of good-will. For did he not make of one blood all the nations of the earth? Well may the poet carol:

'God rest ye little children, let nothing you affright;
For Jesus Christ your Saviour was born this happy night."

Wherever the story of Jesus has gone there childhood has grown dearer and motherhood more sacred. O tell this best of all stories to the little ones this Christmas time; tell it to them so that it will be dearer than any fairy tale ever heard. We would not agree with some to abolish the sweet myth of Santa Claus, or St. Nicholas, or Kris Kringle, but we would have the little ones early know the sweet truth that underlies the myth. Children love myth in its place, but they love truth more, and the boy or girl who is not early told all the story of the Christ-child is robbed of the best part of his inheritance.

"Oh, the beauty of the Christ-child,
The gentleness, the grace,
The smiling, loving tenderness,
The infantile embrace,
All babyhood he holdeth,
All motherhood enfoldeth,—
Yet who hath seen his face?

"Oh, the nearness of the Christ-child,
When for a sacred space,
He nestles in our very homes,—
Light of the human race,
We know him and we love him,
No man to us need prove him,—
Yet who hath seen his face?"

A COUNTRY LIBRARY.

For those of our readers who live in the country, where there is no circulating library, the following experience given in an exchange may prove suggestive.

Each woman who wished to become a member of the association was to pay twenty-five cents as an initiation fee, and dues to the same amount quarterly. She was also to denote one book at the beginning. Officers were elected, consisting of president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, librarian, and book committee of three persons. Meetings were held one in two weeks at the homes of the members for the exchange of books. A constitution and by-laws were adopted, and the association incorporated under the laws of the State.

Socials were the means of raising money for the purchase of books, and when it became generally known that we had such an enterprise under way, donations of money and of books were often given us. One of the members offered the use of a room in her house as a place to keep the books; shelves were put up, and regular meetings held there for two years.

In the meantime the number of books had increased until we had nearly a thousand volumes, comprising history, biography, travels, poems and fiction. We still kept up every possible device to obtain money, and soon decided to erect a building to be used as a permanent library. A lot was chosen from a number offered free for the purpose, and the structure, which, when completed, cost about three hundred dollars, put up.

At the end of four years we now have eleven hundred books, and the building all paid for. Books are let to persons not wishing to become members, at twenty-five cents a quarter, or one dollar a year, and many avail themselves of the opportunity. None of the members are asked to give more than their regular dues, the money all having been raised in the usual manner,—socials, entertainments, etc. It is needless to say that it is considered a great benefit to the community, and every one is willing to help it along.—*Household.*

EFFECT OF TOBACCO SMOKE ON MEAT.

Cases of poisoning due to meat which seemed thoroughly wholesome have sometimes occurred, and have remained unexplained. In the *Revue d' Hygiene*, M. Bourrier, inspector of meat for Paris, describes his experiments with meat impregnated with tobacco smoke. Some thin slices of beef were exposed for a considerable time to the fumes of tobacco, and afterwards offered to a dog which had been deprived of food for twelve hours. The dog, after smelling the meat, refused to eat it. Some of the meat was then cut into small pieces and concealed within bread. This the dog ate with avidity, but in twenty minutes commenced to display the most distressing symptoms, and soon died in great agony. All sorts of meat, both raw and cooked, some grilled, roasted, and boiled, were exposed to tobacco smoke and then given to animals, and in all cases produced symptoms of acute poisoning. Even the process of boiling could not extract from the meat the nicotine poison. Grease and similar substances have facilities of absorption in proportion with their fineness and fluidity. Fresh killed meat is more readily impregnated, and stands in order of susceptibility as follows—pork, veal, rabbit, poultry, beef, mutton, horse. The effect also varies considerably according to the quality of tobacco. All these experiments would seem to denote that great care should be taken not to allow smoking where foods, especially moist foods, such as meats, fats, and certain fruits, are exposed.

THE MOTHER'S DUTY TO THE TEACHER.

BY JULIA A. TERHUNE.

Said a mother to the teacher of the primary Sunday-school class in which her little ones were: "I am glad to have my children in your class; for you can teach them so much better than I. I can never find time, neither do I know how.'

This was not an ignorant mother from a tenement-house. She knew how to attend intelligently to all the details of the secular education of her children. She was not overworked; she always found time to plan and make elegant clothing for herself and family. She was not indifferent to their religious training, but she had not rightly settled the place religion should occupy in her home, and she totally misunderstood the true relation of the Sunday-school to the home.

While the Sunday-school is designed as a help to the parent, there are corresponding duties from the parent to the teacher. Many will naturally suggest themselves to the thoughtful mind, but none seem to me more important than those which should be done before the child enters Sunday-school. I do not now refer to the religious teaching which every parent should give, but to the formation of those habits in children which will render easier the future work of teacher and preacher. The parable of the sower teaches that good soil is necessary, as well as good seed; the prepared heart, as well as the truth to be sown therein. What habits, then, are so important that it may truthfully be said of them, "They prepare the ground?"

First, the very old-fashioned and unfashionable habit of obedience. In the Sunday-school, order is absolutely necessary, that the words of the teacher may even be heard. There can be no rigid enforcement of discipline to compel order, as in a week-day school; there can be little or no punishment. Order must depend largely upon the power and force in the teacher, coupled with the willing obedience of the children. Those who have been trained to such obedience at home most readily obey at school.

It is a mistake to think that little children like best always to have their own way. They like order better than disorder, and are never so happy as when under wise restraint, especially when such restraint is begun, as it should be, at a very early age. The best powers of mind and heart are developed when the discipline is strict, but not severe; and a child more readily obeys the commands of God when he has learned to submit cheerfully to the words of an earthly parent. How shall such obedience be secured? By beginning very early to exact it; by making few rules, giving few commands, but always securing obedience to them.

A second habit which is of great importance in the Sunday-school is attention. A well-known writer on principles of education says, "Habits of attention are permanent mainsprings of education." In the Sunday-school much, of course, depends upon the power of the teacher to secure and hold attention; but her labors are greatly lightened if the children have been taught to listen quietly when an older person is speaking. How often parents and teachers are asked to repeat directions already plainly given. "I did not hear" is a frequent excuse for disobedience. "I did not heed" is the true reason. Since nothing touches the heart which has not first arrested the attention, it is an obvious part of the mother's work to train children into this habit.

A third habit which is of inestimable value in preparing the heart of the child for further religious instruction, is reverence,—for God's word, for his day, and for his house. When children see that the Bible is loved and daily studied by their parents, that "it answers questions, decides differences, and refutes errors," in the home, a reverence for it will naturally spring up in their hearts, and they will learn to consider it supreme authority, through example even more than from precept. So with reverence for the Sabbath. Some one has said, "A great injustice, a far-reaching injustice, is done to the children when they are robbed of the Sabbath day by any use of it for any other purposes than those for which it was set apart." If it is held sacred by the parents, and made happy as well as holy for the children, by innocent employments in which they can take part and find enjoyment, they will early learn to "call the Sabbath a delight," to welcome its weekly return, and to spend it in a suitable and profitable way. Reverence for God's house may be as early and easily taught.

I need scarcely say that the hearts of children so trained will more readily accept later religious teaching than those who have never been taught to hold the Bible or Sabbath or church sacred.

But so many mothers say, "I do not know how to so train my children," and leave the matter there, not realizing that the responsibility of knowing how to do a duty rests quite as heavily upon them as the duty itself. If God gives a child, and says, "Train it for me," he never withholds ability and opportunity to learn how to do it. The truth is, too many mothers think nothing about the training, or of the careful study necessary to do it aright. "If the potter must understand the nature and properties of the clay which he fashions, and if the goldsmith must be acquainted with the precious metals on which he is to work, surely he who has to fashion living, immortal souls, needs to know at least what can be known of the nature of the material." Besides studying the children themselves, books should be studied as well. Training children is an art. Skill in an art is not intuitive; it cannot be "picked up." The great work devolving upon teachers demands that they should be specially fitted for it. Is not the demand far more imperative, that the mother should, as far as possible, prepare herself for her wonderful work?

This preparation includes also a careful training of her own heart and life. The mother is the child's first book. Whatever he fails to read, he never fails to read her. Whatever she wishes her children to be, that must she make herself. The influence of personal character is stronger than any other influence in moulding the hearts of children. The vital element in the training of her children is that which the mother puts of herself into it. To continually give out of heart-force requires a constant replenishing, by daily study of God's Word, and by earnest prayer for help, for wisdom, for guidance.—*S. S. Times.*

CALLING BACK A LOST SOUL.

Miss M. Graham Brown, of Lan-Chau, says: "Our woman, Mrs. Chang, has been very ill with her chest since she went out one wet day. To-day we received a message to ask whether her daughter might come to our compound to 'call back her mother's soul.' It seems that the Chinese imagine that a fright can cause a person to lose one of the three souls which each person is supposed to possess. One day Mrs. Chang was carrying little Colin in our courtyard when she tripped, and was much startled lest baby had been hurt. He was not, but she thinks that then one of her souls dropped out, and has been wandering about ever since; therefore, she has been ill. Of course we firmly refused, as kindly as we could, to have any such ceremony in our courtyard. But our hearts are saddened to think of a woman who has heard this Gospel so long, being still in so great darkness."—*China Inland Mission.*

A HINT FOR READING CLUBS.

Let each member write on a bit of paper what book he or she would like to read during the next week or two weeks, that is, between the lapses of the club meetings. Then, when the votes are all collected—for these really are votes—let the book that has the greatest number be the one that is read at home, and at the next meeting every member will come with a little note-book in which is written what the opinion of the book is, any little anecdote about the characters or the places where the scene is laid, something that has been heard or read about the author, and a short personal opinion of the book as a specimen of good English, as to what its influence would be on the average reader, and whether it is a book that might be called permanent or evanescent. These written opinions should not occupy more than five minutes in reading, and you will be surprised to find what a fund of information is yours when the evening is over.—*The Ladies' Home Journal.*

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From Westminster Question Book.)

LESSON II.—JANUARY 10, 1892.

A SONG OF SALVATION.—Isaiah 26:1-10.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 1-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."—Isa. 26:4.

HOME READINGS.

M. Isa. 25:1-12.—A Song of Thanksgiving.
T. Isa. 26:1-10.—A Song of Salvation.
W. Psalm 48:1-14.—Our God for Ever and Ever.
Th. Psalm 91:1-16.—My Refuge and my Fortress.
F. Psalm 125:1-5.—As Mount Zion—which Abideth for Ever.
S. Rev. 5:9-14.—A New Song.
S. Rev. 7:9-17.—The Great Multitude Before the Throne.

LESSON PLAN.

I. A Song of Trust. vs. 1-4.
II. A Song of Judgment. vs. 5-7.
III. A Song of Waiting. vs. 8-10.

TIME.—About B.C. 712; Hezekiah king of Judah.

PLACE.—Jerusalem.

OPENING WORDS.

This chapter contains a song of thanksgiving to be sung by Israel after their deliverance from the armies of Sennacherib, or on their return from the Babylonian captivity. It has a fuller application in the Church's final triumph over all opposition.

HELP IN STUDYING THE LESSON.

1. *In that day*—that is, in the day of deliverance foretold in the preceding chapter. *A strong city*—Jerusalem, strong in Jehovah's protecting favor; type of the New Jerusalem, Psalm 48:1-3; Rev. 21:12. *Salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks*—God's saving might their sure defence against every enemy. 2. *Open ye the gates*—God's command to his angels within the city to open the gates and let the saints march in and take possession. Compare Psalm 24:7-10; 118:19, 20; Heb. 12:22. 4. *Everlasting strength*—Revised Version, "an everlasting rock;" the Rock of Ages, a certain refuge for ever. 5. *The lofty city*—the stronghold of the enemies of God and his people. Compare Isaiah 24:10, 12; 25:2, 3. 7. *Is uprightness*—rather, is a right way; directed by God to a prosperous issue. Psalm 4:8; 27:11; 143:8. *Dost weigh*—Revised Version, "dost direct." Psalm 37:23; Prov. 5:21. 8. *Waited for thee*—to vindicate thy people and destroy their enemies. 9. Psalm 63:6; Cant. 3:1. 10. *Let favor be showed to the wicked*—continued prosperity will not lead the wicked to righteousness.

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—What was the subject of the last lesson? What was foretold in it about Christ the King? What about the kingdom of Christ? Title of this lesson? Golden Text? Lesson Plan? Time? Place? Memory verses?

I. A SONG OF TRUST. vs. 1-4.—When shall this song be sung in Judah? How does it begin? Who may enter the strong city? How shall they be kept? What are they exhorted to do? Why may they thus *trust in the Lord forever?*

II. A SONG OF JUDGMENT. vs. 5-7.—What judgment will the Lord bring upon the oppressors of his people? What is meant by *the lofty city?* What is said of the way of the just? Meaning of *thou dost weigh the path of the just?*

III. A SONG OF WAITING. vs. 8-10.—For whom had God's people waited? Meaning of *in the way of thy judgments?* How is the earnestness of their waiting expressed? What is promised to all who wait on the Lord? Isa. 40:31. What should men learn from God's judgments? What will be the effect of favor shown to the wicked?

PRACTICAL LESSONS LEARNED.

1. God is the strength and defence of his people.
2. He is worthy of their fullest trust and confidence.
3. He will deliver them from all their enemies.
4. He will make their path plain before them.
5. His providences should teach men righteousness.

REVIEW QUESTIONS.

1. What is the beginning of this Song of Salvation? Ans. We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks.
2. What are God's redeemed people called upon to do? Ans. Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.
3. What will the Lord do for his trusting people? Ans. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.
4. What will be the effect of God's judgments? Ans. The inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.

From the Painting by B. Plockhorst.

"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO TO ME."

CAPTAIN JANUARY.

(By Laura E. Richards.)

CHAPTER V.—CAPTAIN JANUARY'S STAR.

And where was little Star, while all this was going on down on the beach? Oh, she had been having a delightful afternoon. It was cloudy, and Daddy was going to be busy, so she had determined to spend an hour or so in her own room, and enjoy all the delights of "dressing up." For the great chest that had been washed ashore from the wreck, the day after she herself had come to the island, was full of clothes belonging to her "poor mamma"; and as we have seen, the little woman was fully inclined to make use of them.

Beautiful clothes they were; rich silks and velvets, with here and there cloudy laces and strange webs of Eastern gauze. For she had been a beautiful woman, this poor mamma, and it had been the delight of Hugh Maynard, her proud and fond husband, to deck his lovely wife in all rare and precious stuffs. Some of them were stained with sea-water, and many of the softer stuffs were crumpled and matted hopelessly, but that mattered little to Star. Her eyes delighted in soft, rich colors, and she was never weary of turning them over and over, trying them on, and "playing s'posa" with them.

"S'posa," she would say, "my poor mamma was going to a banquet, like the Capulet one, or Macbeth's. Oh, no! 'cause that would have been horrid, with ghosts and daggers and things. S'pose it was the Capulets! Then she would put on this pink silk. Isn't it pretty, and soft, and creamy! Just like the wild roses on the south side of the meadow, that I made a wreath of for Imogen on her birthday. Dear Imogen! It was so becoming to her. Well, so my poor mamma put it on—so! and then she paced through the hall, and all the Lords turned round and said, 'Mark'st thou yon lady? 'Cause she was so beautiful, you know. This is the way she paced!" and then the little creature would fall to pacing up and down the room, dragging the voluminous pink folds behind her, her head thrown back, and a look of delighted pride lighting up her small face.

It was the funniest little place, this room of Star's, the quearest, quaintest little elfin bower! It was built out from the south side of the tower, almost like a swallow's nest, only a swallow's nest has no window looking out on the blue sea. There was a little white bed in a corner, and a neat chest of drawers, and a wash-stand, all made by Captain January skilful hands, and all shining and spotless. The bare floor was shining too, and so was the little looking-glass which hung upon the wall. And beside the looking-glass, and above it, and in fact all over the walls, were trophies and wonders of all kinds and descriptions. There was the starfish with ten legs, pinned up in sprawling scarlet; and there, beside him, the king of all the sea-urchins, resplendent with green and purple horns. And here were ropes of shells, and branches of coral, and over the bed a great shining star, made of the delicate gold-shells. That was Daddy's present to her on her last birthday. Dear Daddy! There, sitting in the corner, was Mrs. Neptune, the doll which Captain January had carved out of a piece of fine wood that had drifted ashore after a storm. Her eyes were tiny black snail-shells, her hair was of brown sea-moss, very thick and soft ("though as for combing it," said Star, "it is im-possible!"), and a smooth pink shell was set in either cheek, "to make a blush." Mrs. Neptune was somewhat battered as Star was in the habit of knocking her head against the wall when she was in a passion; but she maintained her gravity of demeanor, and always sat with her back perfectly straight, and with an air of protest against everything in general.

In the window stood the great chest, at once a treasure-chamber and a seat; and over it hung one of the most precious things of Star's little world. It was a string of cocoanut-shells. Fifteen of them there were, and each one was covered with curious and delicate carving, and each one meant a whole year of a man's life. "For the nuts was ripe when we kem ashore, my good mate Job Hotham and me, on that Island. So when the nuts was ripe agin, ye see, Jewel Bright, we knowed 'twas a year since we kem. So I took my jack-knife and carved this first shell, as a kind of token, ye know, and not thinkin' there'd be so many to carve." So the first shell was all covered with ships; fair vessels, with sails all set, and smooth seas rippling beneath them; the ships that were even then on their way to rescue the two castaways. And the second was carved with anchors, the sign of hope, and with coils of rope, and nautical instruments, and things familiar to seaman's eyes. But the third was carved with stars, and sickle curved moons, and broad-rayed suns. "Because ye see, Peach Blossom, earthly hope bein' as ye might say foundered, them things, and what was above 'em, stayed where they was; and it stiddied a man's mind to think on 'em, and to make a note on 'em as fur as might be." And then came one covered with flowers and berries, and another with fruits, and another with shells, and so on through the whole fifteen. They hung now in little Star's window, a strange and piteous record; and every night before the child said her prayers, she kissed the first and last shell, and then prayed that Daddy Captain might forget the "dreadful time," and never, never think about it again.

So, on this gray day, when other things were going on out-of-doors, Star was having a "good time" in her room. She had found in her treasure-chest a short mantle of gold-colored velvet, which made "a just exactly skirt" for her, and two ends trailing behind, enough to give her a sense of dignity, but not enough to impede her movements. "For I am not a princess to-day!" she said; "I am delicate Ariel, and the long ones get round my feet so I can't run." Then came a long web of what she called "sunshine," and really it might have been woven of sunbeams, so airy-light was the silken-gauze of the fabric. This my lady had wound round and round her small person with considerable art, the fringed ends hanging from either shoulder, and making, to her mind, a fair substitute for wings. "See!" she cried, running to and fro, and glancing backward as she ran. "They wave! they really do wave! Look, Mrs. Neptune! aren't they lovely? But you are envious, and that is why you look so cross. 'Merrily, merrily, shall I live now, under the blossom that hangs on the bough,'" She leaped and danced about the room, light and radiant as a creature of another world; then stopped, to survey with frowning brows her little blue stockings and stout laced boots. "Ariel never wore such things as those!" she declared; "if you say she did, Mrs. Neptune, you show your ignorance, and that is all I have to say to you." Off came the shoes and stockings, and the little white feet were certainly much prettier to look at. "Now," cried Star, "I will go down stairs and wait for Daddy Captain, and perhaps he will think I am a real fairy. Oh, wouldn't that be fun! I am sure I look like one!" and down the stairs she flitted like a golden butterfly. Once in the kitchen, the housewife in her triumphed for a moment over the fairy; she raked up the fire, put on more wood, and swept the hearth daintily. "But Ariel did such things for Prospero," she said. "I'm Ariel just the same, so I may as well fill the kettle and put some apples down to roast." This was soon done, and clapping her hands with delight the "tricksy spirit" began to dance and frolic anew.

"'Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands!'"

she sang, holding out her hands to invisible companions.

"'Courtesied when ye have, and kissed
(The wild waves whist!)
Foot it featly here and there.'

"Oh! foot it featly, and feat it footly, and dance and sing, and tootle-ty ting!" cried the child, as she flitted like a golden cloud about the room. Then, as she whirled round and faced the door, she stopped short. Her arms fell by her side, and she stood as if spellbound, looking at the lady who stood in the doorway.

The lady made no motion at first, but only gazed at her with loving and tender eyes. She was a beautiful lady, and her eyes were soft and blue, with a look of tears in them. But there was no answering softness in the starry eyes of the child; only a wide, wild look of wonder, of anger, perhaps of fear. Presently the lady, still silent, raised both hands, and kissed them tenderly to the child; and then laid them on her breast, and then held them out to her with a gesture of loving appeal.

"I don't know whether you are a spirit of health or a goblin damned," said Star; "but anyhow it isn't polite to come into people's houses without knocking, I think. I knowed you were a spirit when you looked at me yesterday, if you did have a red shawl on."

"How did you know that I was a spirit?" asked the lady, softly. "Oh, little Star, how did you know?"

"'Cause you looked like my poor mamma's picture," replied the child, "that my poor papa had round his neck. Are you my mamma's spirit?"

The lady shook her head. "No, darling," she said, "I am no spirit. But I have come to see you, little Star, and to tell you something. Will you not let me come in, Sweetheart?"

Star blushed, and hung her head for a moment, remembering Captain's January's lessons on politeness and "quarter-deck manners." She brought a chair at once, and in a more gracious tone said (mindful of Willum Shakespeare's lords and ladies), "I pray you sit!"

The lady sat down, and taking the child's hand, drew her gently towards her. "Were you playing fairy, dear?" she asked, smoothing back the golden hair, with loving touch.

Star nodded. "I was delicate Ariel," she said. "I was footing it featly, you know, on these yellow sands. Sometimes I am Puck, and sometimes Titania; but Daddy likes Ariel best and so do I. Did you ever play it?" she asked, looking up into the kindly face that bent over her

The lady smiled and shook her head. "No, dear child," she said, still with that motherly touch of the hand on the fair head. "I never thought of such a pretty play as that, but I was very happy as a child playing with my—with my sister. I had a dear, dear sister, Star Would you like to hear about her?"

"Yes," said Star, with wondering eyes. "Was she a little girl?"

"Such a lovely little girl!" said the lady. "Her hair was dark, but her eyes were like yours, Star, blue and soft. We played together always as children, and we grew up together, two loving, happy girls. Then my sister married; and by-and-by, dear, she had a little baby. A sweet little girl baby, and she named it Isabel, after me."

"I was a little girl baby, too," said Star, "but I wasn't named anything; I came so, just Star."

"Little Isabel had another name," said the lady. "Her other name was Maynard, because that was her father's name. Her father was Hugh Maynard. Have you ever seen or heard that name, my child?"

Star shook her head. "No!" she said; "my poor papa's name was H. M. It was marked on his shirt and han'k'chief, Daddy says. And my poor mamma's name was Helena, just like Helena in Midsummer Night's Dream." The motherly hand trembled, and the lady's voice faltered as she said, "Star, my dear sister's name was Helena, too. Is not that strange, my little one?"

The child looked curiously at her. "Where is your dear sister?" she asked. "Why do you cry when you say her name? Is she naughty?"

"Listen, Star," said the lady, wiping the tears from her eyes, and striving to speak composedly. "My sister made a voyage to Europe, with her husband and her little baby. They spent the summer travelling in beautiful countries; and in the autumn, in September, Star, ten years ago this very year—think of it, my dear!—they sailed for home. They came in a sailing-vessel, because the sea-voyage was thought good for your—for my sister. And—and—the vessel was never heard from. There was a terrible storm, and many vessels were lost in it."

"Just like my poor mamma's ship!" said the child. "Perhaps it was the same storm. Do you think—why do you look at me so?" she cried, breaking off suddenly.

(To be Continued.)

THE LITTLE BOY STOPPED CRYING AND OPENED HIS MOUTH.

LITTLE TIM'S CHRISTMAS.

A TRUE STORY.

(By John Law, in Pall Mall Budget.)

PART I.

The sun lay like a red ball in the foggy sky, high up above the London houses. One could not see across the street, or recognize the faces of passers-by, for the yellow fog blinded one's eyes, and confused one's senses. It was thick in the city, thickest of all in the borough.

There, in a garret, two little boys stood with their faces pressed to a pane of glass, watching the red ball and wondering.

"What is it, Tim?" asked the youngest.

"'Er's the moon, Bill," replied Tim. "When I wos down 'opping I seed 'er all bloody like that, and Sally said 'er wos the 'arvest moon. I guess 'er's come to Lunnon."

A knock at the door made the children draw their faces quickly away from the window.

"'Ush!" whispered Tim to his brother, "I guess it's School Board after us."

The knock came again. Tim went softly to the door and peeped through the key-hole.

"It's Sally!" he cried; "I'll unlock the door."

"I thought you wos School Board," he explained as an old woman came into the room carrying a jug. "Mother's took our boots, and 'er said if School Board comed we wosn't to let 'im in. What 'ave you got in that jug?"

"Wos mother drunk?" inquired the visitor, without heeding his question.

"Well 'er sleep 'eavy last night."

"'Ave yer had any breakfast?"

"Nothink. Baby cried 'isself to sleep, and Bill and me's been lookin' at the 'arvest moon, what you and me seed when we wos 'opping. What's in the jug?"

"Tea."

"Tea!"

"Yes, my son. Taste it." Sally poured something out of the jug into two broken teacups, and handed it to the children.

"Good?" she asked.

"Prime!" said Tim.

"Sweet?"

"Treacle!"

Sally chuckled. She was old and weather-beaten; dressed in rags and a crape bonnet. Wrinkles scored her face, creases furrowed her neck; her eyes were sunk deep down in their sockets, but they smiled lovingly on the boys while she watched them enjoying her own scanty breakfast.

"'Ere's summat for the fire," she said, opening her apron, which she held together with a horny hand, and showing Tim some bits of paper and a few cinders. "Got any sticks?"

Tim pointed to a broken box on the hearth.

She set to work.

"Now I'll be off," she said, when a fire burnt in the grate. "If anyone comes after me, just yer say, 'Does yer want rags sorted?' and if the party says 'Yes,' then yer say, 'Well, Sally won't be 'ome for a bit.'"

"All right," said Tim. "When will you be back?"

"Not before one, sonny."

Saying this, the old woman left the room, casting a glance at the fire that gleamed through the fog, and a hasty look at the red ball in the sky which Tim called the "'arvest moon." She knew it was the sun, but why should she confuse the minds of the children?

After the door was shut the boys went to the fire and crouched down on the hearth. Yellow fog filled the room, hiding the old bed where the baby lay under a dirty blanket, and throwing a curtain over the broken chairs and boxes. Tim held his hands up before the burning sticks. He looked wondrous wise in the firelight. Gleams fell on his small white face, showing his wizened features, from which all traces of childhood seemed to have vanished. He had been sole protector of his two little brothers for the space of a year and a half, ever since his father found a home in the cemetery. His mother drank, and when drunk she was sometimes violent. He had seen a good deal of life, although he was only eight, for he lived in a Southwark lodging-house. Fights, murders, suicides, and deaths made epochs in his existence, and he talked of "when I wos young" as though the time lay far back in his memory.

Presently the baby began to cry, and Tim went to fetch it from the bed. He brought it to the fire, and fed it with some of the tea which old Sally had given to him for his breakfast. While he was busy with the baby, Bill crawled to the window.

"Oh, Tim!" he said, "the red ball 'as gone out o' the sky."

"I guess," said Tim, "'ers gone back to the country."

Then Tim's thoughts wandered to the days when he had gone hopping with old Sally to the harvest moon and the hop-fields. He would have been perfectly happy then if he had not "worried" about the children.

"When I wos young," he said aloud, "I never worried about nothink!"

Just as the words were said a shrill cry came from the window.

"What's the matter?" asked Tim.

"I's cut my thumb wid a bit o' glass," sobbed Bill.

"Come to the light and let me see," said Tim.

The little boy came howling to the hearth, holding out his thumb, and pointing to the blood upon it.

"Whatever will I do?" exclaimed Tim. "It's lock-jaw he's got, I knows it."

Only the week before a man had died from lock-jaw in the room below the garret; and Tim had heard his mother discussing the matter with her neighbors. "If they'd stuck his jaws open directly he cut his thumb, he'd have pulled through," some one had said, "but all the doctors in London couldn't force his jaws open after he got to the hospital."

Tim laid the baby on the bed, where it lay crying as loud as it could cry, because it was cold and famished; then he went back to the fireplace, and found a square piece of stick.

"'Old yer mouth open," he said to Bill.

The little boy stopped crying and opened his mouth.

Tim slipped the stick between his teeth. "Now," said Tim, "come along to the 'ospital!"

But Bill threw himself on the floor and kicked. His thumb was bleeding and he felt suffocated, so he rolled on the ground until he lost his breath. Directly he became pale and stiff, Tim picked him up and struggled with him out of the room and down the staircase. No one saw the children leave the house, for the place was full of fog and very dark; so they arrived in the street, where Tim laid his brother down on the pavement, and stopped to pant and to stretch his arms for a minute. Then he picked Bill up again, and struggled bravely along with his burden until he reached the hospital.

"What is it?" inquired the hospital porter as he passed through the gate.

"Lock-jaw, sir!" panted Tim.

"I thought it was a bundle of rags," said the man; "there, to the left, that's the Out-patients' Department."

Tim struggled into the receiving-room, holding his brother tightly round the waist.

"What is it?" asked a doctor.

"Lock-jaw," gasped Tim, "but I've stuck his jaws open."

Loud peals of laughter made him stare at the doctors and students who had gathered round Bill.

"Ain't it lock-jaw?" he whispered to a nurse, who was standing by.

"No," said the woman, "of course it isn't."

For a moment Tim could not believe his senses. Then an awful vision floated before him, a vision of his mother. Supposing she came home while he was away, and found the baby alone, crying? What would happen then? It is but a step, they say, from the sublime to the ridiculous; but sometimes that step is across a precipice. Tim shuddered when he heard the students laughing at his mistake. He had meant to save Bill's life, and all he had done was to make himself a laughing-stock.

Without a word he took his brother's hand and left the hospital. Bill trotted by his side through the foggy street, pointing to the sticking-plaster on his thumb, and chattering about the penny he had received from one of the medical students.

"P'raps mother ain't come home," thought Tim, "or p'raps 'er's so drunk 'er wun't see us!"

PART II.

An hour later the doors of the hospital receiving-room was pushed open by old Sally, the rag-sorter. She hurried through them, carrying little Tim, whose head lay against her ragged dress, while his arms and legs dangled down, and blood streamed from his forehead.

"Why, this is the boy who came here an hour ago with the lock-jaw case," said the doctor, when Sally laid Tim on the table.

The students crowded round to look, but they did not laugh at Tim now, for they thought he was dead. They listened to the doctor's questions, and watched old Sally's face as she explained that the boy had fallen on the hearth in the garret.

"Is he your grandson?" inquired the doctor as he felt Tim's pulse.

"No, he ain't. I'm a lone woman. I've got no children. I fend for myself."

"Well, it's a matter for the police," the doctor said. "I believe the boy has been knocked down, or kicked; his head's smashed."

The fog had lifted by the time Sally left the hospital. She went back to the lodging-house, up the staircase, and into her room. Rags covered the floor. A large heap of rags made a bed, another heap served as a seat. A horrid stench filled the place, but Sally was accustomed to the smell, and she never opened the window, saying that she liked to be "warm and comfortable." While she was raking the cinders together in the grate, and patting a black cat that had raised its back to welcome its mistress, the door was opened, and Tim's mother came in with the baby in her arms, and Bill hanging to her skirt.

"Sally," she said, "I was drunk when I did it!"

"Yes, yer wos," said Sally, and yer'd best make yerself scarce, for the p'leece 'as been told, and if yer don't take yerself off yer'll swing for it!"

"Will he die!"

"The doctor say's 'e 'ull."

"Will you mind the children a bit?"

"Yes, till Christmas."

The woman placed the baby on the heap of rags and vanished.

Each day Sally visited the hospital, and sat beside the bed on which Tim lay unconscious. Tears streamed down her cheeks, and she wiped them away with the back of her hand, saying to the nurse, "I've loved 'im like a son. I'm a lone woman. I never had no children."

At last, on Christmas Eve, when she went to the hospital at about seven o'clock, she found Tim himself again.

She sat down beside him, smoothing out her ragged dress, and trying to make her crape bonnet sit straight upon her head. Tim's white face frightened her, and she could not speak. She did not want him to see that she was crying.

A great fire blazed opposite Tim's bed, and round the fire sat boys and men, reading, playing games, and discussing politics. Nurses flitted about, decorating the walls with ivy and holly, while they chatted to one another and laughed with the patients. No one seemed to be very ill except Tim, but a single glance at his face told Sally that he was dying.

"Tim, my son," she said at last, "this is a beautiful place, ain't it?"

"Yes," answered Tim faintly, "it's like 'eaven."

Neither spoke again for a few minutes. Then Tim pointed to some toys on the bed.

TIM'S MOTHER CAME IN.

"Take 'em 'ome to the children," he said. "When I wos young I set my 'eart on a top like this un 'ere what I've got for Christmas. Take it 'ome to Bill."

The old woman pretended to admire the toys, while her tears dropped on the blanket.

"Sally," said Tim presently, "does you remember when we went 'opping?"

"Yes, my son."

"Well, that wos like this 'ere 'ospital; it wos like 'eaven."

Old Sally's eyes wandered over the ward, and she admired the decorations. Tim lay with his eyes shut, thinking of the time when he had gone hopping. He had "worrited" then about the children, and now he felt that he was going away from them for a long time, going to the strange land his father had talked about when he "wos young." He was not sorry to go, but he could not help "worriting" about the children. One of the nurses began to sing a Christmas carol, and Tim opened his eyes to look at her. Then he saw old Sally beside his bed, dressed in the same ragged dress, and the same old crape bonnet she had worn when they went into the country together. Sally had always been good to him, and he knew that she never broke a promise.

"Sally," he said, "when I'm gone yer'll look after the children?"

"Yes, my son," said Sally, "I ull."

Tim gave a sigh of relief. He closed his eyes again, and by the time the nurse had finished singing he was asleep, with one hand under his cheek, and the other in Sally's horny fingers.

The next morning when the sun was shining, and the Christmas bells were ringing, Sally went again to the hospital. A heavy snow had fallen during the night, and now the Borough was covered with a white pall that hid all its deformities. Children shouted while they snow-balled passers-by, and the policemen pretended not to see what was going on, unless (by some accident) a snowball hit them. Every one seemed to rejoice because King Sol had put in an appearance, for he comes seldom to London, so he gets a right royal welcome.

"Don't go upstairs," said the porter after Sally had climbed the Hospital steps, "your little lad's not there any longer."

"Where may 'e be?"

"I'll show you."

She followed the porter along the passages and down a staircase.

"Is 'e dead?" she asked, when the porter stopped to unlock an iron door.

"Yes, I've just brought him down here," said the porter.

Old Sally went into the mortuary, and stood crying while the man uncovered a little coffin. There lay Tim, with a smile on his face, and his hand holding a bit of holly, "because it was Christmas."

For a minute Sally looked silently at him. Then she bent down to kiss his forehead. "Tim, my son," she whispered, "I wun't forget my promise."

It is several years since little Tim went home. His mother has not been heard of since. The children live in Sally's room, with the cat. Bill has developed a genius for sorting rags, and the baby has been taught to pick out the papers from the rubbish Sally finds in the dust heaps.

Somehow or other the old woman manages to pay the rent and to provide food for the children; how she does this is only known to herself. She has not forgotten little Tim. Often at dusk, before she lights the dip candle, she calls the boys to the fire, and says:

"Now, my sons, I ull just tell yer 'ow yer brother Tim kept 'is last Christmas!"

THEIR CHRISTMAS GIFT.

Chapter I.

It was growing dark very fast in one of the principal squares of a large city, though the clocks had just struck four. Delivery waggons of all descriptions were starting out on their last rounds for the day, heavily laden, for it was Saturday, and little more than a week before Christmas. The wind whirled fine arrows of snow through the air, already piercing enough, and drove the shoppers before it like leaves, into the stores, which were a blaze of light and warmth.

A beautiful carriage stood in front of the best florist's in the square. Arching their necks, pawing the ground, stood the impatient greys, as if they, too, knew that there was no time to be wasted. The footman stood holding the door.

"A dozen pink ones, Mr. Garrett, just budded, and the same in white. Yes, in a box. And then for Christmas night, won't you send me ten dollars' worth of varieties suitable for decorations?"

"Will that be all, Mrs. Adams?"

"Yes, all to-night. Let me see, I might as well buy the wreaths now, it's almost time. Give me half a dozen of holly, with a good many berries. No, not any mistletoe; there are no young people at our house, you know."

With these words, and a low sigh, Mrs. Adams hurried out and entered the carriage, and the footman closed the door. "To Mr. Adams' office, John." Then, closing the window, she busied herself distributing the many packages in her pockets, to make room for her husband.

"Ah, my dear, so good of you to come to meet me, in spite of the snowy air. Shopping, I see—looks like Christmas. Which is for me? You won't tell? Well, it'll be sure to be something I want!"

"If only they all were as easy to buy for as you, it would be a simple matter. But this considering, and twisting, and wondering! Grace Murray will expect me to give her something exactly equal to what she gave me last year, or even a little more, and then she has everything she can need or want beside!"

"What makes you do it, my dear?"

"Custom, Frank, custom, of course. I declare, I'm almost discouraged; it is such a task!"

"That makes me think, speaking of being discouraged, I had a letter from Will to-day. He is very despondent; says this month since Lucy died is the longest he ever spent—house seems so lonely, the children don't get any care; and, worst of all, crops have been very poor this year."

"So he had to write to you about it. I declare, it is too bad, the only brother you have is no comfort to you, but writes you all his troubles. Why couldn't he have stayed here, and let you help him into some good business?"

"We might as well get out, here we are at the door. Church as usual to-morrow, John, if it's not too snowy," said Mr. Adams, hastening after his wife, who had entered the house while he was speaking.

"We'll have tea immediately," said she to the maid who opened the door. "I'm hungry and tired. Put these flowers into a cool place until afterwards."

While Mr. and Mrs. Adams are eating supper, let us glance at their surroundings, and look even at themselves a little more closely. At the right of the front door opens the spacious drawing-room, its costly furnishings telling of wealth, while the beautifully chiselled Venus, group of bronze slaves, cases of choice engravings and photographs, besides the rare paintings on the wall, give evidence of the love of art of those who have placed them there. At the back of the room, in stately rows, stand the organ-pipes, silent now, but with mouths wide open, ready to breathe out the soul of music. Opposite this room is the library. Our friends, you see, are lovers of books as well as of art and music, for here are wide, roomy bookcases, their contents varied as the tastes of their readers.

So much for their surroundings. Now let us peep through the portieres in the hall, and perhaps we may read through the veil of their faces the characters of those within. Happy ones, you say, surely, but I fear not quite; for upon all the loveliness of their home there is no loving touch of the wear and tear of children. Perhaps they are longing now for a battered spoon or a worn-out chair. We shall see.

Mr. Adams, a man of forty, with hair just tinged with gray, and grave, thoughtful eyes, in spite of their suggestion of mischief, sits back and smiles at his wife, as she tells him it is Saturday night, and a quiet, sweet Sabbath all to themselves awaits them. And she? Yes, she has been a very happy woman, but sorrow lines have deepened round her eyes, and her black dress tells that not long since affliction has been her unwelcome visitor. Well, now they have finished their meal, and they walk arm-in-arm to the library. He takes his easy-chair, close to the fire-place, and draws one close to it for her, but having also taken his evening paper, does not notice that she has not taken the chair until he feels her gentle touch on his forehead. Now, she has taken his hand and led him to the other side of the room, where hang pictures of a beautiful boy and girl, almost babies, saying, "Come and see, dear. Have you forgotten? It is their twelfth birthday, and I have placed the rose-buds here as before. During those three Christmasses while we had them, how bright were our anticipations of these happy ones, we thought, to come; but now, I almost wish there was no Christmas!"

"I was thinking of it to-night as we sat at table; it seemed to me the very silence of the house cried out rebelliously to my heart. We are both of us blue to-night. let us think of something cheerful. Have you sent out the invitations for the dinner-party Christmas night?"

"No, I cannot think of that now. I would rather have the children."

"Yes, I know what a different thing Christmas used to be. Yet, dear, we must not murmur; it was our father's will."

There was silence for a few minutes. They had taken the seats by the fire, and one of Mrs. Adams' hands lay in her husband's tender grasp, while with the other she wiped her tearful eyes. But soon she spoke, reminding him that these days of joy to others were doubly sad to her, because of dear ones gone, father, mother, brothers, sisters, ending with these words: "Why, even the mistletoe I see in the stores brings tears to my eyes, recalling holiday joys in the old home, and how we made it ring with our laughter. But all that is past, and I must say good-by to it forever."

"Why say that, dear? Can we not make those happy who have no homes? I've been thinking we might have a party from the day-nursery, or even take one or two for our own."

"How cruel, Frank, how sacrilegious, to have another's children running round the rooms which our dear little ones had but just learned to tread! What would it be but a constant reminder of our own loss? No, Frank, I can't; don't ever ask me. Come, play me something soothing on the organ."

Half an hour she lay on the divan, amidst its soft cushions, while the organ plaintively, melodiously sang andantes from Beethoven. She had lain quite still, and so enraptured was she and absorbed in watching her husband's fingers slowly following the keys, that she did not hear the loud peal of the door-bell, nor glance at the envelope placed in her hand till the last notes died away and he stood by her side.

"Why, this is a telegram for you, Frank! What can it be?"

"Business, I suppose. I hope that new agent hasn't got discouraged. No, it isn't that. Anything for you to know? Not exactly. Come, let us retire."

So saying, he took his wife's arm and led her gently upstairs, and sleep, that sweet restorer, was soon doing its blessed work for them. Did I say "them"? I should have said "her," for many hours passed before he slept. When the regular sound of her breathing told that she was asleep, he rose, turned up the gas, took from his vest-pocket the telegram, and read it once, twice, three times. Then he folded it, saying, "To-morrow I must tell her," and kneeling by the bedside silently he prayed that God would prepare them both for the morrow.

After breakfast, Mr. Adams followed his wife into the library, where she was adding water to the fragrant rose-buds, waited until she had finished and seated herself, then laid the bit of brown paper, so heavily freighted, before her. She read it aloud:

"House and barns destroyed by fire last night. Telegraph me if I may send the children to you next week, as it will be a long time before I can provide a house for them. Will."

The paper fell from her fingers, she leaned back in her chair, shading her eyes with her hand. The tall clock in the hall ticked loudly, each beat seeming to echo in her heart, "Can you?" "Will you?" "Can you?" "Ought you?" Mr. Adams understood his wife, knew that silently would the battle be fought, waited until the church-bells began to ring, and then spoke.

"It rests with you, dear. Do as you think best. We shall have till to-morrow morning to think about it. The carriage is here to take us to church; perhaps there the Lord will show us our duty."

And does God ever leave those unaided who look to him for guidance? Has he not said, "I will guide thee with mine eye?" The minister announced his text: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." As he spoke of the many homeless, naked, sick and hungry in the world to be cared for, Mrs. Adams' eyes were opened, and again the door of her heart, for, she thought, "while I keep these little ones from my home, I shut out the Saviour also. It has been once opened to him, and I cannot shut it." Silently they rode home. Mr. Adams seated himself in the library, but his wife went directly to her room, laid off her bonnet, and walking down the hall, turned into a large, sunny room at the end. At one end of this room were two little beds, side by side, and beside the chimney-place at the other two tiny rockers. On a large table, a hobby-horse, box of blocks, two large balls and a doll lay patiently waiting for childish hands. Mrs. Adams closed the door, locked it, went to the bureau, opened the drawers, took out each article one by one, looked at it lovingly, and laid it back. Two pairs of little shoes, worn but once—"Could she?" "Would she?" "Inasmuch?" Yes, she could. Hurriedly she closed the drawer, opened the door, almost flew down the stairs, as though she feared it might be too late, glided into the room and threw her arms about her husband's neck: "Write it quickly, dear, tell him to send them at once. We are quite ready to make them happy."

"How can I thank you, dear? Let us rejoice that he gives us this to do for him. Perhaps he has a blessing in it, and something like the old joy will revive in seeing them happy. He has answered our prayer, and given us what we longed for, the noise and prattle of children."

Chapter II.

It was Christmas night, and in the drawing-room windows of the Adams mansion hang the holly-wreaths, and the house is brilliantly lighted. Mrs. Adams is putting the last touches on the vases and dishes of flowers in the dining-room. "Here, Lulu," to a girl of ten who stands by her side, "carry these into the drawing-room. I will put these others on the mantel. Here's Sarah to ring the tea-bell. Oh, anywhere you think they'll look prettiest and not tip over, and then knock on the library-door and tell Uncle to leave the rest till after tea. It's five o'clock, and the children will be coming."

Just then a nurse entered with a boy of five and a girl of three. As she seated them at the table, Mrs. Adams pressed a fond kiss on each lovely forehead, and took her seat.

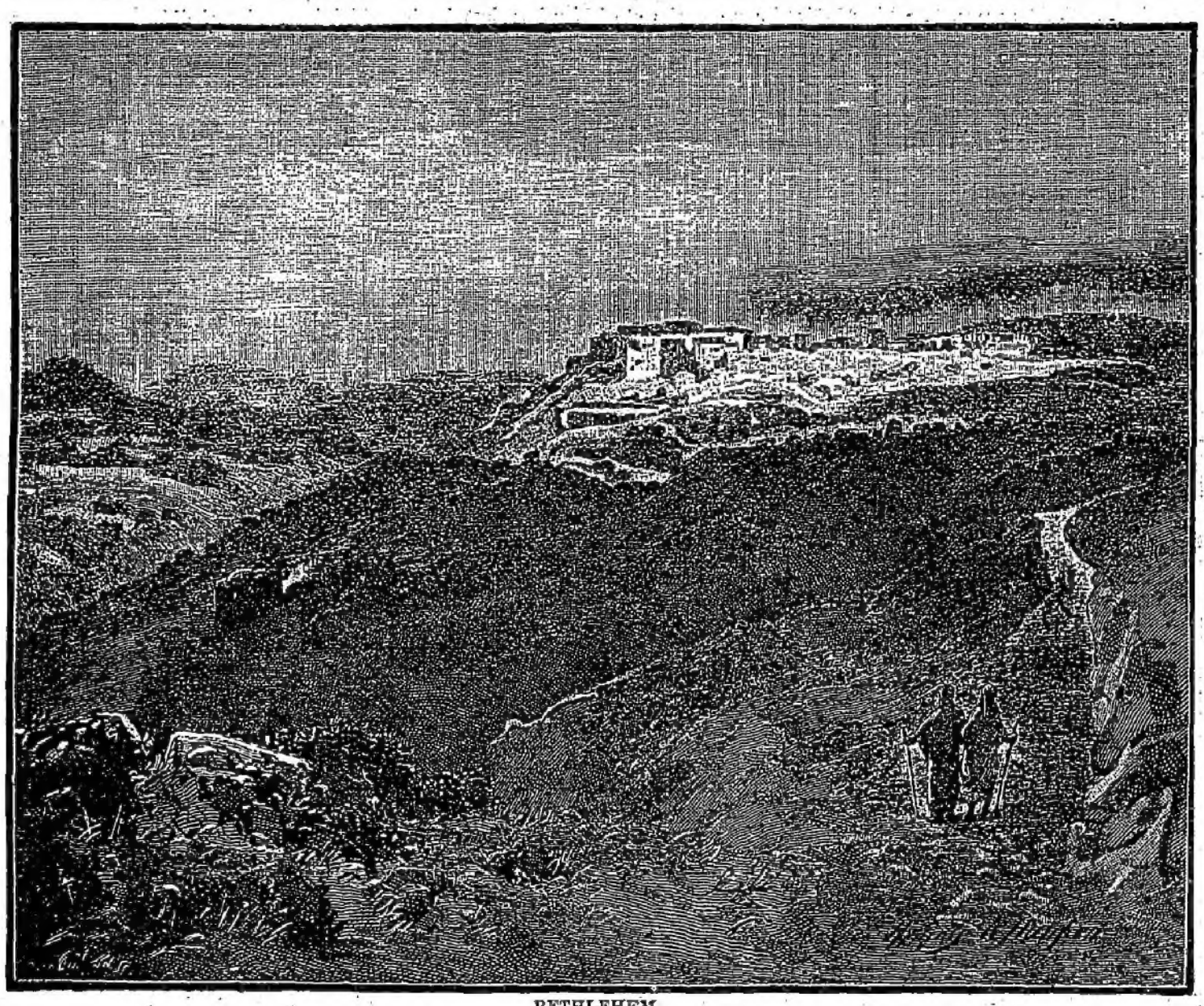
Before they had quite finished, peal after peal of the door-bell told that company had come, and when all were assembled, a happy group gathered round the piano and sang a merry carol.

Then Mr. Adams opened the library-door and invited them in, where the prospect of a glittering tree met their eyes, and when Mr. Adams went up to the tree and began to take off dolls and books, and toys of all kinds, and Lulu and Frank and even little Bess handed them round to the other children, how their eyes did sparkle! How they did clap their hands, and how fast they talked!

When all the candles were blown out, and the last carriage had rolled away, and all three children were safely tucked in bed, Mrs. Adams said to her husband: "I wouldn't have believed we could have had such a happy, merry Christmas; and, stranger than that, Harold and Rose seem nearer and dearer than ever."

"Yes, strange things have happened, a great deal of joy has come to us in a short time; but we must remember that it may not always be so. Trying days may come when we can only repeat to ourselves his words, 'My grace is sufficient for thee;' but let us thank him again and again for our singular Christmas gift."—*Visitor.*

Asketh how near is Paradise, thou who for it hast striven?
How far soe'er from Truth thou art, so far art thou from heaven.
—*Chicago Inter-Ocean.*



BETHLEHEM.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM.

BY PHILLIPS BROOKS.

O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy dark and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.

Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

For Christ is born of Mary
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of his heaven.

No ear may hear his coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

Where Charity stands watching,
And Faith holds wide the door,
The dark night wakes; the glory breaks,
And Christmas comes once more.

O holy child of Bethlehem,
Descend to us we pray!
Cast out our sin and enter in;
Be born in us to-day.

We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!

"THERE WAS NO ROOM FOR THEM IN THE INN."

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE HARVEST OF A QUIET EYE."

Christmas day again, and again for us that old, old story of the first Christmas. An old story, but that yet keeps its newness, I think, more freshly than any other long familiar story can do. An old story, but indeed ever full of marvel, if we once set ourselves to think of it. A Saviour born into this sin-worn world; the Star in the east that led to him, the great light that shone from heaven upon the sleeping shepherds; their dread, and the glad tidings of the Angel of the Lord, swelled on the instant by the sudden chorus of the multitude of the Heavenly Host, praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men." How familiar it all is to us, and yet how ever new! How naturally we look for the old Christmas texts when Christmas comes, and yet how they strike a chord in our heart, which is not surpassed in gladness, hardly equalled, by the joy of Easter—Christmas-time, the very word comes full of kindly thoughts, and kindly words; and well may we join in them, and say to readers in all lands, "A happy Christmas to you all, my friends."

But I am going to take you back now to that first Christmas-time, and to the Inn at Bethlehem, and to the manger hard by. Let us try to fancy the scene, coloring it. "There was no room for them in the Inn." Luke ii., 7.

"No room for them." For whom? Even for the Virgin Mary, and the child Jesus. No room, in the Inn at Bethlehem, for the Saviour of the world!

Picture the scene. Crowding guests, some bound on traffic; some on pleasure; the inn thronged, two weary travellers, even the aged Joseph and his virgin wife, coming late, knocking for admittance. Both travel-worn; one especially needing rest, care and comfort. But the blunt answer comes from the door held half-open; "No room;" other earlier guests had thronged the resting place: "There was no room for them in the inn."

There, in that lowly manger, jostled and pushed on one side because of the press of more important guests, our God became man—yes, he whose name was and is, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He whose name is called King of Kings, and Lord of Lords—was born of a lowly Virgin, and became the Babe of Bethlehem. Think: our God, our maker, enduring such humiliation in order to become our Redeemer! Think of that little babe, the maker and sustainer of all these worlds!

No room for him; and so the world's maker and the world's Saviour was born in a manger, no better place found for his welcome; even thus early, he came to his own world, and his own creatures received him not. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." This was seen even in its first beginning, and the hour that the whole world had waited for, whether consciously or not, arrived, and was fulfilled; and who knew of it, or who cared for it? The lowly carpenter and his virgin wife; the Eastern sages that followed the bright star; the simple Jewish shepherds who had witnessed that irrepressible joy of heaven, which contrasts so strangely with the apathy of earth. No room for him, on that night of his first lowly advent, no room for him in the inn. Yes, and it has been, ever since, the same. I speak not now of his sad earth-life, of his facing even worse than his brute creatures; "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." I speak not now of what happened 1800 years ago; I speak of what has been ever since; of what is the rule even at the present time.

There is room in this world of ours, in these hearts of ours, for a thousand thronging guests, cares, businesses and pleasures. But often, oh, too often, there is *no room* for him, no room for him, the Saviour, the inn is full. If he can find a spare neglected corner, anywhere, why, that is the best often that is allowed for him. Many have not even a manger for him, not even in their thronged lives as it were an outhouse unoccupied where he may be born to them. A thousand occupations crowd, a thousand businesses importune; sometimes apologetic, sometimes sharp and rude, the answer comes still when he seeks admittance, "There is no room for thee."

O precious Saviour; and hast thou endured, and wilt thou yet endure, this rebuff from the creatures whom thou madest, and whom thou wouldest redeem? Ah, with which of us here, hast thou not thus graciously dealt? Which of us, even if he have happily received thee at last, has not, time after time, replied to thy condescending importunity, "There is room nearly for all beside, but no room for thee. This presses and that presses, and thou, oh sad, sweet pleader, must stand without, must house thee where thou canst. Come again, at a more convenient season; at a more leisure time; there is no room for thee in the inn."

No room in the inn, in the preoccupied heart, in the life of busy traffic, room for this and room for that; room for sorrow and room for joy; room for work and room for play, but no room for Jesus. Often he is still kept outside, outside of our hearts; outside of our best love; all the crowd of world traffic, and world merrymaking is admitted, but he stays without.

How few take him into their heart's inn,—well called an inn, for how its inmates change with the passing days;—how few take him in at all; how few give him their heart's best room; how few take care to be not over-crowded, but that, whoever else is shut out, there may be, for him, always *reception*, always *attendance*, always the best of all ready; and let who will shift as they may, all that the heart is and all that the heart has, may be ready at his call. How seldom we find this; no, he is put off, if he be not quite and rudely rejected. There is no room for him in the inn; perhaps some by-place may be found; some manger, where he can be sometimes, however rarely, visited; and where he will not be always in the way. A poor manger, perhaps, we some of us reserve for him. For can the common type of religious worship and observances, (if these even ever rise so high as worship,) be called much better? But not in the inn's best room; not in the heart's throne; not, indeed, in the inn at all; not at all in the heart's absorbed regard, can Jesus find room. And so, O miracle of love! He condescends still to plead, and still to be rejected. "Lord, there is no room for thee!"

"Oh, how meekly didst thou take
Thy sore portion for our sake!
All along the path of pain,
Urging the same plea in vain,
Entrance now—as entrance then,
Entrance to the souls of men,
Must the answer ever be,
'Lord, there is no room for thee'!"

—Now I call it keeping only a manger for Christ, if we do offer to him and in his name, some degree of devotion; but only as it were the scraps and leavings, not the first offering of that we are, and that we have. Do the wants of the body crowd and press out our time for quiet meditation, for holy prayer? Is Sunday a day of open-heartedness for him: a day for drawing near to worship, as the Eastern Sages and as the blessed Virgin did; or even on that his day, are many cares and interests suffered to throng and disturb us? Is there, in fine, room for him in every heart here, or must he sadly at last turn away and leave you, think of this, more forlorn than the world was ere his first coming. It expected and yearned for a Saviour; but for you he would have come, and gone! Think of it; he would have come; sought admittance, been shut out from your too crowded and busy heart, and have gone! No Saviour to look for any more; only a certain fearful looking forward to judgment and fiery indignation.

For some will not keep any place at all for him, even a manger for him; they will have none of him; he must go. Ah, blindness and self-cruelty! While he was at hand, even though without, in the manger, there was hope for better things, hope that at least when its throngs of guests first served had left the heart, and it was empty, desolate and deserted, hoped that then, ungraciously, at last, he might be invited to enter. But, if there be no room at all, and still no room as life goes on; and if once, he be quite driven away, ah, think of a time coming, when earth must make room for the Judge, whom she shut out as the Saviour.

"Son of God, when thou shalt come,
Heralded by trump of doom—
Companied with legions bright,
Stooping all the world in light—
Laying bare the secrets dread
Of the quailing quick and dead,
Late, too late, the cry will be,
'Lord, we must make room for thee.'"

Nay, then, at this Christmas time, let us find, let us make, room, among other thronging pleasures and importunities, let us make room for him, the chiefest Guest of all. Let us beseech him, if he hath hitherto been kept out, to break in, to force the closed door by the might of his grace. Room there is, room there must be, for him, room in the noisiest, busiest heart; there is while he is kept out, ever a vacancy, ever a hollow craving; until he be taken in no guest can compensate at all, or take his place; until he enter, the best room still stands empty. When we see him, shall we not wonder, even those who did not altogether drive him from the premises,—shall we not wonder, those whose preoccupied hearts shut him out from their best time, their chief devotion, their choicest love;—shall we not wonder, beholding him at last; the King in his beauty; the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley; the chiefest and the best, that we ever could have kept him without, and cared instead, to let in any other?

GOING TO MARKET IN HOLLAND.

SKATING IN HOLLAND.

Who would imagine that any country could offer more inducements in winter to pleasure loving people, than could this Canada of ours? With our coasting, tobogganing, snowshoeing and skating, what tale of balmy breezes and sunny climes could win us from our allegiance? How the sleighs are brought out before the ground is more than covered with the first fall of snow, and how the boys watch every stream and pond from the time the first hint of frost is in the air, until the ice is thick enough to bear them for fear that through neglect they might miss the use of their skates for one day. How quickly the school yard is cleared when the word is pased around that the ice is safe. And how tantalizing it is that we can get so little of it. Ponds and streams are not plenty, especially near cities, and even if they were, a few hours of a Canadian snow-storm will spoil the best open air rink ever seen. But in Holland, what is with us only a pastime, seems to be a part of ordinary everyday life. In that land of canals men, women and children skate as we walk. Everybody there, says an English writer, can skate; it is not a mere sportive or fashionable accomplishment; the peasant goes in this way to market, the tradesman to his shop, the artisan or laborer to his work; whole families, carrying bag or basket or baby, skate from their rustic homes to the nearest town for a holiday treat or a friendly visit. The distances in Holland are not too great; students of the University of Utrecht, for example, can skate in the day to a social dinner even at Amsterdam, and get back to college by the appointed hour at night; the journey between Leyden and Amsterdam has been done, by very good skaters, in little more than an hour. The ladies of Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and the Hague are the most graceful lady skaters in Europe.

There are two different schools of the art of skating; that of Friesland, which is the more practical, aiming at speed and the performance of long journeys in a short time, insists on a perfectly erect and rigid position of the body, darting straight forward; while the fashionable Dutch school is rather intent on the artistic display of skill in winding and turning, usually with a swaying motion of the hips, from right to left and from left to right, keeping a fine balance of the head and arms. The practitioners of this ornamental skating will inscribe the most complicated and fantastic figures, or write their names and other words, even whole sentences, on the ice; but all that is fancy work. Skating among the country folk is part of the ordinary customs of life, and is one of the things which Dutch children have to learn at an early age.

Lady Henry Somerset told the other day of a visit she paid to a poor old blind woman, in a broken down hut on the west coast of Scotland, to whom she had said, "Oh, Kitty, how miserable you must be here alone!" "Miserable!" she exclaimed in astonishment, "I'm the child of a king, and I'm only waiting a little while until he shall call me home." She had rest, and was happy.—*Word and Work.*

PEEPING.

When the world is fast asleep,
Out of bed the children creep,
Just to take a stolen peep
At their Christmas stocking!

"Santa Claus!" the children cry,
"Did you tumble from the sky?
Did you down the chimney fly
With our Christmas stocking?"

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!
Christmas in lands of the fir-tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm-tree and vine;
Christmas where snow-peaks stand solemn and white,
Christmas where corn-fields lie sunny and bright,
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Christmas where children are hopeful and gay!
Christmas where old men are patient and gray;
Christmas where peace, like a dove in its flight,
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight,
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night.

For the Christ-child who comes is the Master of all;
No palace too great and no cottage too small.
The angels who welcome him sing from the height,
"In the city of David a King in his might."
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Then let every heart keep its Christmas within,
Christ's pity for sorrow, Christ's hatred for sin,
Christ's care for the weakest, Christ's courage for right,
Christ's dread of the darkness, Christ's love of the light,
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night;

All the stars of the midnight which compass us round
Shall see a strange glory, and hear a sweet sound,
And cry, "Look, the earth is aflame with delight,
O sons of the morning, rejoice at the sight."
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

MILLY'S SACRIFICE.

BY KATE S. GATES.

"Oh, dear me!" said Milly Carter dolefully; "I don't see what I am going to do."

She was upstairs in her own room, with the contents of her "bank" spread out on the floor before her, making her calculations for Christmas; but, do her best, she could not make the amount of cash that she had on hand equal to the amount she wished to expend.

"That is for papa," she said, tapping one little pile with her finger, "and that for mamma; that is grandma's, and that grandpa's, and that is Susie Gray's; and that is every single cent that I have got in the world. I don't see how I can do it;" and Milly sighed again more dolefully than before.

Down at school that afternoon the girls had been telling what they expected to get for presents at Christmas. Everybody had told of something they wanted and expected—everybody but Maggie Drew.

"What do you expect, Maggie?" asked Cora Clarke.

"Nothing," answered Maggie, with a quiver in her voice, and her eyes brimming over with tears. "I haven't had a Christmas present since I can remember."

It seemed dreadful to Milly; she did not wonder that Maggie could not keep back the tears.

"I wish I could give her something; it will just spoil my Christmas to think of her," thought Milly, as she hurried directly home from school to see if she could not manage it in some way.

"I can't leave out papa nor mamma, of course, nor grandpa nor grandma either; nor Susie, for we have always given each other something. That takes every cent of money I've got, and mamma won't let me borrow, I know. O—oh!" Milly gave a little startled exclamation, and then sat very still for a minute or two.

Why not talk to Susie about it, and instead of giving to each other, give to Maggie?

But somehow Milly did not want to do that. Susie always gave her such pretty presents, and it was so nice to have lots of things. She was ever and ever so sorry for Maggie, but it seemed a little hard to give up a present of her own.

"I don't believe it would be very polite to Susie either," she said, gathering up her quarters, dimes and pennies, and putting them back. Then she went downstairs, and tried to forget all about Maggie and Christmas, but Maggie's sorrowful words seemed to ring in her ears. "I should think you would just be ashamed of yourself," whispered the still, small voice. "Just think of all the nice Christmas presents you have had, and she cannot remember having one single one. You don't deserve any yourself. Don't you remember the verse Miss Wells talked to you about in Sunday-school—'Freely ye have received, freely give?' Don't you remember she said that for everything you received you ought to give something away? If you have a happy time, you must give a happy time to some one else, and so on. You have had lots and lots of happy Christmas times; I should think you had better give one away now."

Milly's conscience did not say all this at once, but it kept saying it, and do her best, she could not stop it, and presently she began to be ashamed of herself for trying to do so.

"Oh, dear! I did not know that I was so selfish. I will go right over to Susie's now, and see what she says, and I will make Maggie have a happy Christmas this year if I possibly can."

"Mamma," said Milly, hesitatingly, on Christmas day, "you won't be hurt, or mind what I tell you, will you? Your present and papa's were just as lovely and splendid as they could be, but somehow they didn't make me quite so happy as seeing Maggie, and Susie says the same. You don't know how happy she did look, and oh, I am so glad we did it! I mean to make a happy Christmas every year now for somebody that don't have one."

"'Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me,'" quoted mamma tenderly.

A STORY OF CHRISTMAS DAY.

I never like a Christmas season to pass without telling to some one a thrilling incident which happened at my house just eight years ago this coming Christmas. We had just distributed the family presents Christmas morning when I heard a great cry of distress in the hallway. A child from a neighbor's house came in to say her father was dead. It was only three doors off, and, I think, in two minutes we were there. There lay the old Christian sea-captain, his face upturned toward the window as though he had suddenly seen the headlands, and with an illuminated countenance as though he were just going into harbor. The fact was he had already got through the "Narrows." In the adjoining room were the Christmas presents waiting for his distribution. Long ago, one night, when he had narrowly escaped with his ship from being run down by a great ocean steamer, he had made his peace with God, and a kinder neighbor than Captain Pendleton you would not find this side of heaven.

He had often talked to me of the goodness of God, and especially of a time when he was about to go into New York harbor with his ship from Liverpool, and he was suddenly impressed that he ought to put back to sea. Under the protest of the crew and under their very threats he put back to sea, fearing at the same time he was losing his mind, for it did seem so unreasonable that when they could get into harbor that night they should put back to sea. But they put back to sea, and Captain Pendleton said to his mate, "You call me at ten o'clock at night." At twelve o'clock the captain was aroused and said: "What does this mean? I thought I told you to call me at ten o'clock, and here it is twelve." "Why," said the mate, "I did call you at ten o'clock, and you got up, looked around and told me to keep right on this same course for two hours, and then to call you at twelve o'clock." Said the Captain, "Is it possible? I have no remembrance of that." At twelve o'clock the captain went on deck, and through the rift of the cloud the moonlight fell upon the sea and showed him a shipwreck with one hundred struggling passengers. He helped them off. Had he been any earlier or any later at that point of the sea he would have been of no service to those drowning people. On board the captain's vessel, they began to band together as to what they should pay for the rescue, and what they should pay for the provisions. "Ah," said the captain, "my lads, you can't pay me anything; all I have on board is yours; I feel too greatly honored of God in having saved you to take any pay." Just like him.

Oh, that that old sea captain's God may be my God and yours. Amid the stormy seas of this life may we have always some one as tenderly to take care of us as the captain took care of the drowning crew and the passengers. And may we come into the harbor with as little physical pain and with as bright a hope as he had; and if it should happen to be a Christmas morning, when the presents are being distributed and we are celebrating the birth of him who came to save our shipwrecked world, all the better, for what grander, brighter Christmas-present could we have than heaven?—*T. De Witt Talmage.*

A MERRY MERRY CHRISTMAS

to you all, readers of the *Northern Messenger*. It does not seem possible that it is a whole year since we greeted you last, it seems only a few weeks. Yet so it is. Here we are at the end of 1891. Standing at the close of this year, the *Messenger* looks back on a year of good success, and we look forward to much more in the year to come. In this we again bespeak the help of every friend of our paper. To double our circulation this year it is only necessary that each subscriber secure one more. Could an easier task be proposed, could any request be more easily complied with? Will you not help us, as you have done in the past? By doing so you will not only widen the influence of your paper but you will very greatly aid in stemming the tide of trashy literature which is continually pouring in upon us. Give our young people the best reading matter and before long they will not be satisfied with any other. A study of our announcements already made and others still to come will show you the inducements we offer to our workers. With your co-operation we shall in a year from now wish to double the number of friends, what we now wish to every reader of the *Messenger*,

A MERRY, MERRY CHRISTMAS
and
A HAPPY NEW YEAR.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED.

The *Northern Messenger* calls for volunteer workers in making it better known. It depends upon them very largely to increase the number of subscribers to it. The readers of the *Messenger* who like it, and who enjoy themselves in reading it, want others to do the same, do they not? If so, they will do well to talk to their friends about it, and get them to subscribe also. What a fund for conversation and pleasure there is when your friends have read the same stories and articles as yourself. We request every *Messenger* volunteer worker to send us a post card with name and address, and we will send in return a copy of the *Witness* and several extra copies of the *Messenger* for distribution and a blank subscription list. From now on, the Sunday school edition will be mailed to Sunday schools weekly, instead of fortnightly as heretofore.

A PLEASANT LETTER.

Here is one of the pleasant letters the *Messenger* has received lately. It is from a minister in Pennsylvania, but as we have not his permission to print this we withhold his name.

DEAR "NORTHERN MESSENGER,"—I had thought of stopping your bi-weekly visits to my study, because my funds were low, but I would miss you so much, and you are really so inexpensive to keep, that I must renew, if I have to go without some other luxury for it. Some years ago I subscribed for my Sunday school class in ——————. I feel impelled to do the same now, for my class here. You and your cousin of New York, "Sabbath Reading," are doing a noble work for the Lord. May he speed and prosper you.

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